

From: Joan Schafer/R3/USEPA/US
Sent: 1/13/2012 10:44:00 AM

To: Ron Borsellino/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Kathy Hodgkiss/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Dennis Carney/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Michael DAndrea/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Daniel Ryan/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Michael Kulik/R3/USEPA/US; Cecil Rodrigues/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Jon Capacasa/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Walter Wilkie/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Gerald Heston/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Helen Duteau/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Terri-A White/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Roy Seneca/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Gray.Heather@epa.gov; Humane Zia/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Taylor.Trish@epamail.epa.gov; Jennie Saxe/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Early.William@epamail.epa.gov; Shawn Garvin/R3/USEPA/US@EPA

CC:
Subject: AP story re this morning's rally

http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gkwmPpRSTSoMNeu845Gv04UVL_qg?docId=880ad95d7d0b40b39f478b652e0692cb

Pa. families asking EPA chief to send water

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, Associated Press – 4 minutes ago

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Residents of a small northeastern Pennsylvania town at the center of the political fight over natural gas drilling are taking their complaints directly to the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

A handful of residents-turned-activists from Dimock joined environmental activists from elsewhere to rally Friday outside a conference at Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences on urban environmental issues. They planned to ask EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to investigate their water issues and to deliver water — two moves that would establish their problem as a federal one.

That's a necessary move they say, because state environmental officials are not doing what they should to help.

A state investigation found that 18 wells in the Susquehanna County village were contaminated after natural gas drilling began there in 2008.

About a dozen residents have sued Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., claiming the energy company caused the contamination when it extracted natural gas using a process known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, a method that has spurred a boom in natural gas drilling in several states while raising concerns about the toll on the environment and public health.

Cabot denies contaminating the wells, saying most wells in the region were laced with methane long before the arrival of drilling. Nevertheless, the company trucked in fresh water for the residents to use for bathing and washing clothes and dishes. The deliveries stopped Nov. 30 after state regulators determined that Cabot had fulfilled its obligations to the residents under a 2010 consent agreement. The residents say their aquifer is still contaminated.

The federal government has wavered about its role, initially saying the water posed no health risk, then that it merited more study, then in the space of 24 hours last week promising to deliver water and reneging.

Craig Stevens, a resident of Silver Lake, near Dimock, said he called the EPA on Thursday and was told that Jackson would visit the town and would consider bringing water with her. A spokeswoman for the agency did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Meanwhile, about 50 protesters held banners and chanted, "Lisa Jackson, take some action!"

In a move that was partly symbolic and partly a practical goodwill gesture, several of them brought with them bottles of water for the handful of Dimock residents to take home.

"It's a ridiculous redefinition of life to have to get bottles of water and to have to live by the graciousness of water," said Victoria Switzer, a Dimock resident who sold gas drilling rights under the 5 acres she owns.

Pennsylvania's environmental chief, who works for a pro-drilling governor, has criticized his federal counterparts, saying the EPA has only a "rudimentary" understanding of the contamination.

Joan Schafer
Communications Coordinator
Hazardous Site Cleanup Division
USEPA - Region 3
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Phone: (215) 814-5143
Fax: (215) 814-3001
e-mail: schafer.joan@epa.gov